

DRAFT

Area-Wide Soil Contamination Task Force Task Force Charter

Summary

The Departments of Agriculture, Ecology and Health and the Office of Community Development (collectively, “the agencies”) believe that a statewide strategy is needed to address area-wide soil contamination problems posed by arsenic and lead. The Area-Wide Soil Contamination Task Force (Task Force) was created to advise the four agencies on this issue. The Task Force will examine issues and concerns raised by area-wide soil contamination and, by June 2003, develop findings and recommendations to respond to the problem.

Background and Problem Statement

Soil in large areas of Washington State is contaminated with low-to-moderate levels of arsenic and lead. This contamination has been caused by a variety of historical activities including past releases from industrial operations and historical application of certain kinds of agricultural pesticides. As Washington’s population has grown, many of these areas have been developed into residential neighborhoods, schools, and parks. These development activities, which continue today, have created pressures for cleanup and have raised a variety of health, environmental, and marketplace concerns. Widespread low-to-moderate levels of soil contamination present special challenges with respect to human health protection, land use conversion, financial impacts, and citizen awareness. Current efforts to address these problems are hampered by:

- Gaps in understanding of the size and location of soil contamination problems;
- Insufficient financial resources to address this problem;
- Failure to fully integrate (on a widespread basis) measures to cleanup soil contamination with local land use planning and other community development activities; and,
- Limited of public awareness of the problem and steps that can be taken to minimize exposure.

Task Force Objectives

The Task Force is formed to advise the agencies on a statewide strategy for addressing area-wide arsenic and lead soil contamination problems. Specifically, the Task Force is asked to issue findings and recommendations on the following questions:

- What is currently known about the nature and extent of arsenic and lead soil contamination in Washington State? What steps should be taken to improve our understanding of the location and magnitude of arsenic and lead soil contamination?
- What are technically feasible measures for addressing widespread low-to-moderate soil contamination problems? What is the full range of actions that might be considered to address widespread low-to-moderate levels of soil contamination?
- What changes are needed to eliminate barriers to addressing area-wide soil contamination problems? How can agencies facilitate cleanup of area-wide soil contamination problems under the current legal system?
- What agencies need to play a role in addressing area-wide soil contamination problems, and what are possible funding sources?

The scope of the Project is determined by this charter, the Area-Wide Soil Contamination Project Assumptions, and contractual obligations established by the agencies. The Task Force process will be further defined in a Task Force work plan, which will be developed in February 2002 for adoption by the Task Force at their second meeting in March 2002.

Issues Outside of the Range of Task Force Deliberation

There are several issues that are beyond the scope of the Project. These include:

- **MTCA Cleanup Standards:** The extent of the area-wide arsenic and lead soil contamination problem in Washington is defined by the MTCA Cleanup Standards. Ecology has recently completed a five-year process to review and update those standards. Consequently, the Task Force is not being asked to review and provide recommendations on (1) cleanup standards for individual hazardous substances, (2) the risk policies underlying those standards, or (3) the technical methods used to establish the standards for arsenic and lead.
- **Ongoing Projects:** There are a number of cleanup and/or development projects where arsenic and lead soil contamination is already an issue. These projects will continue during the Task Force process and the Task Force is not being asked to review and provide recommendations on site-specific problems. However, it is anticipated that these ongoing projects will provide context and learning opportunities for the Task Force.
- **Current Agricultural Operations:** This project is not designed to address agricultural land that continues to be used for agricultural purposes. The focus is on land that has been converted to other uses and/or land with a high potential for being converted to other uses that may result in people coming into greater contact with any contaminated soils that may exist on these lands.

Expectations of Task Force Members and Process

The Task Force is composed of participants from a broad base of experiences and geographic sectors relevant to area-wide soil contamination issues. The group will be guided by designated co-chairs that, along with a neutral facilitator, are charged with managing the process.

The Task Force is at the center of the Area-wide Soil Contamination Project. All Task Force members are expected to:

- Participate fully and honestly in meetings and strive for consensus;
- Reach out to the organizations they represent and, as appropriate, to other stakeholders to communicate about the project status and to gather input and ideas for the project; and,
- Participate in the identification, review, and analysis of options.

It is particularly critical to the project success that the Task Force members fully commit to their roles as conduits for information about the project. Task Force members are responsible for bringing information about the project to groups that they represent and bringing ideas, suggestions, concerns, and other input from those groups to the Task Force's work.

Expectations for Task Force members are further defined in the Area-Wide Contamination Project Task Force Ground Rules.

Schedule

The Task Force will hold approximately 10–12 meetings between January 2002 and June 2003 and will issue findings and recommendations in June 2003. Meetings will be held approximately once every six weeks at locations throughout the state.

Signatures

Bill Brookreson, Acting Director
Department of Agriculture

Tom Fitzsimmons, Director
Department of Ecology

Mary Selecky, Secretary
Department of Health

Busse Nutley, Director
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